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Intellectual Bridge to the East

MUNICH, Germany—The extraordinary intellectual bridge between East and West that has been erected here is an important monument to the stubborn ingenuity of man's curiosity.

This bridge has been built upon three installations—Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and the Institute for the Study of the USSR. The experts accumulated by these three organizations have managed to stir a lively cross-flow of thought through the Iron Curtain.

As far as is known, the only Western Kremlinologist who can claim to have emphatically noted Nikita Khrushchev's political vulnerability and correctly predicted the identities of his successors is Yuri Marin, a Russian emigre attached to the Institute. Writing last June, Marin described some compelling reasons why Khrushchev's position was "not strong," indicated that he might well be overthrown and named Leonid I. Brezhnev and Alexei N. Kosygin as most likely to succeed him.

Marin's insights, like most of the Sovietology in Munich, were derived from detailed scrutiny of Russian publications and broadcasts. The Institute keeps files on the Soviet Union's elite and has even published a "Who's Who in the USSR" with more than 4,000 entries. The staff conducts its meetings in Russian, subscribes to more than 700 publications and studies the broadcasts monitored by RFE.

The flow of ideas east from Munich is accomplished by two radio operations. RFE,

aimed at the satellites, and Radio Liberty, aimed at the suppressed nationalities within Russia, work at feeding the hungry appetites for objective news reports and Western ideas.

The claim of RFE's officials that they reach 20 million East Europeans every week could be questioned. Listener ratings are obtainable only through interviews with Communist citizens who are permitted to visit the West. But after several thousand of these interviews, it is interesting that more than 60 percent of these East Europeans, presumably the safer element of the population in the view of their regimes, assert that they tune regularly to the Western signals.

The attention given these broadcasts is solidly attested by unique occasions like the visit of Robert Kennedy to Poland. The Polish media, responding to government policy, played down the visit but RFE broadcast the itinerary and Kennedy was swamped with wellwishers along his route.

The East Europeans are the most heavily propagandized people in the world. Their ears are courted by Moscow radio, their own government stations, BBC, and the Voice of America as well as RFE. They form a sophisticated, skeptical audience that will not respond to blatant propaganda and must be reached with subtlety.

Youth's fascination with Western culture and their disappointment with the fruits of Communism are extremely useful to the propagandists. But they must contend with

the deep political detachment that has settled upon the young people who have grown up in Communist societies.

A group of young Hungarians visited the RFE headquarters in Munich on the day after Khrushchev's ouster. Expecting they would be breathless to learn more of the events in the Kremlin, RFE officials were surprised to find them far more anxious to discuss the Olympic results in Tokyo.

But many listeners are courageous enough to write to the broadcasters. Radio Liberty actually attracts mail, mostly written by young people, from within the Soviet Union. The general spirit of these letters was expressed by some young Ukrainians who wrote recently:

"We are young and we are interested in knowing everything. In this you help us a lot. We are very grateful to you for your efforts because they inspire in us faith in a better future for our people."

These Munich operations are important for their contributions to filling the knowledge gap. The Bulgarian writer learns of new liberalizations in Hungary. The Czechoslovak economist learns the capitalist answers to Marxist problems. Western policy-makers learn the human equations that guide relations between the bloc governments.

The division of the world will ultimately be resolved by explosion or evolution. The hopes for a non-explosive solution are improved by the understanding that is generated by the resourceful activities in Munich.

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